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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 HARARE 001130

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SENV](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE HUNTING SUPPORTS REGIME INSIDERS AND
CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Classified By: Poloff Scott Higgins, reason: 1.4 d

SUMMARY

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary. Despite a 50 percent decline in receipts since 2004, the \$17.5 million a year safari hunting business remains an important source of foreign currency in Zimbabwe. At least 12 regime insiders on the U.S. financial sanctions list reportedly have interests in the industry. Hunting revenue also provides essential funding for conservation efforts. With little or no government support for the National Parks and Wildlife Authority (Parks) and conservation in general, income from hunting keeps Parks functioning, provides local communities income for conservation and development projects, and serves as the life blood for the remaining private conservancies in the country.
End Summary.

Safari Hunting Still Viable, But In Decline

[¶2.](#) (U) Despite a sharp decline in tourism receipts over the past couple of years, safari hunting in Zimbabwe remains an important source of foreign currency. According to a November 28 article in the government-controlled newspaper The Herald, since January, safari hunting has contributed \$15.8 million (36 percent) of the \$43.9 million brought in by tourism to date. (Note. According to the GOZ's October 1 Monetary Policy Statement, total forex earnings for 2006 were about \$1.7 billion, and are projected to be close to that for 2007; total international tourism earnings for 2007, according to the Herald, will amount to only about \$48 million, or 3 percent of overall forex receipts. End Note.) While a 10-14 day trophy hunt in Zimbabwe is "cheap" by comparison with other African countries, the cost is still big money. The typical 10 day elephant hunt can cost \$25,000

per person and a lion hunt can run \$40,000. Americans account for more than 60 percent of hunters coming to Zimbabwe with the rest coming mostly from Europe.

¶3. (U) Prior to the start of the fast-track land reform program in 2000, the commercial wildlife industry, including hunting and eco-tourism, was growing. However, adverse international publicity about declining socio-political conditions and controversial hunting practices (including high quotas, poaching, and poor wildlife management on private land seized by regime insiders) has taken a severe toll on the tourism industry and the safari hunting sub-sector. Morris Mpofu, division chief of exchange control at the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, told participants at the Safari Operators' Association of Zimbabwe (SOAZ) annual general meeting in November that safari hunting earnings had fallen over 50 percent from \$34.7 million in 2004.

How the System It Works

¶4. (U) There are three categories of land in Zimbabwe on which hunting is allowed: state land, communal land, and private land. On state land under the jurisdiction of Parks, the 16 safari area hunting concessions are offered via a public auction. However, any Zimbabwean - including a regime insider - is free to participate and win. Plus, it is impossible to ascertain who may be financially backing a particular winning bidder. State land also includes 6 forest area hunting concessions allocated by tender.

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¶5. (C) In recent years, there have been reports that several lucrative safari areas concessions were awarded without being offered for public tender to allow regime insiders to gain control of concessions at below market prices. Sally Bown, a SOAZ representative, stressed that may have been a problem in the past, but the most recent concession allocations have been done in a fair and open manner. George Pangeti, chairman of Parks and the Africa representative for Safari Club International (SCI), told poloff that Parks now insists on public auctions specifically to avoid undue political interference and to ensure Parks receives the full value of the offering. (Note: Parks is a financially self-sufficient parastatal that receives no funding from the government except for a specific allocation for development in Gonarezhou National Park. End Note.)

¶6. (U) Hunting on communal lands is managed through the Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) program. There are 37 districts that participate in the program, but only 12 generate revenue on a regular basis accounting for 97 percent of all CAMPFIRE income. About 90 percent of CAMPFIRE income comes from leasing trophy hunting concessions. Under CAMPFIRE, wildlife revenues are divided among the local communities, wildlife management, the rural district councils, and the CAMPFIRE association. Pangeti told us that the CAMPFIRE governing board recently approved a measure to require all communal land concessions to be allocated by public auction starting in 2008.

¶7. (U) Private land is the most controversial category from a sanctioned individual/ property rights perspective. During the fast-track land reform program, many farms, private game reserves, and conservancy properties were seized and given away as patronage to regime insiders and ruling party supporters. There are no public records of ownership and control of the seized land.

¶8. (U) Concession holders and private land owners sell their hunting quotas either to a single safari operator on a contractual basis for a season or book individual 10-14 day hunts directly with safari operators or professional hunters. Safari operators, professional hunters, and booking agents

regularly attend the annual SCI convention in Reno, Nevada to solicit U.S. clients. They also do a considerable amount of marketing on the Internet and in trade publications.

¶9. (U) A client typically pays a hunting registration fee to Parks, a daily rate to the guide or safari operator (about \$1,000 per day), and a trophy fee for any animal taken. Trophy fees accrue to Parks, CAMPFIRE, or the private land owner depending on where the hunt takes place. The safari operator or professional hunter may also charge an additional trophy fee for their services. The current trophy fees are about \$12,000 for elephant, \$6,500 for lion, \$3,500 for sable, \$3,000 for hippo, and \$2,500 for leopard. Parks also charges an export fee for any trophy shipped out of the country. The decision on where to hunt depends on a number of factors, including cost, locale, and the client's expectations (e.g., wilderness experience or desire to shoot a specific animal).

Sanctioned Nationals in the Safari Industry

¶10. (C) Although hunting revenues are declining, some individuals on the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) list of Specially Designated Nationals (SDNs) are still earning foreign currency from hunting. SDNs have stakes in safari area concessions, safari operators, and private land/ private hunting reserves. They do not have

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interests in communal lands where, according to Don Heath, a professional hunter and former Parks official, more than 50 percent of hunts with Americans take place.

¶11. (C) Establishing a connection between SDNs and their safari interests is difficult because these individuals are often careful to hide their direct involvement in the business. According to Heath, the following OFAC-sanctioned individuals are known to have a stake in a safari area concession, safari operator, and private land/ private hunting reserve:

- Edward Chindori-Chiningwa (Gwaai Valley Conservancy);
- Jocelyn Chiwenga (Matetsi Unit 6 Safari Area);
- Ignatius Chombo (Chiredzi River Conservancy);
- Dumiso Dabengwa (Gwaai Valley Conservancy);
- Joseph Made (Gwaai Valley Conservancy);
- Amos Midzi (Gwaai Valley Conservancy);
- Kembo Mohadi (Gwaai Valley Conservancy);
- Simon Moyo (Gwaai Valley Conservancy);
- Obert Mpofu (Gwaai Valley Conservancy);
- Webster Shamu (Chirisa Safari Area and 51 percent stake in Famba Safaris), wife also has a separate interest in Chete Safari Area, but she is not on the SDN list;
- Charles Utete (Gwaai Valley Conservancy);
- Paradzai Zimondi (Charara Safari Area);
- Lovemore Chihota (Matetsi Unit 7), brother of SDN Phineas Chihota;
- Thandi Nkomo (Tuli Safari Area), sister of SDN Louise Nkomo who is the spouse of SDN Francis Nhema.

(Note: Heath has agreed to assist in gathering documentation on hunting properties and concessions of SDNs. Post will forward any information received. End Note.)

Conservation Depends on Hunting

¶12. (U) The prolonged decline in the economy and rising levels of food insecurity have contributed to a number of threats against the once respected wildlife management and conservation programs in the country. Desperation and poverty, especially in rural areas, have led to an increase in poaching and encroachment into wildlife areas, including

national parks and conservancies

¶13. (U) Parks' conservation efforts, already under severe strain due to a lack of resources, serve as the only line of defense against increased poaching and resettlement in national parks, including Mana Pools National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and Gonarezhou National Park, which is part of the Great Limpopo Trans-Frontier Park, a tri-country initiative including Mozambique and South Africa. According to Dr. Morris Mtsambiwa, director general of Parks, 92 percent of Parks' income is derived from hunting revenue, which it uses to fund operational costs, including staffing state lands with wardens and rangers, conducting investigations and seizures in illegal wildlife trade, and anti-poaching activities. Parks executives as well as every NGO and private sector expert we consulted agreed that Parks would collapse without income from hunting.

¶14. (U) Hunting revenue is also essential for local communities that participate in the CAMPFIRE program. Almost 90 percent of CAMPFIRE income comes from trophy hunting concessions. From 1998-2001, CAMPFIRE generated over \$20 million for participating communities -- of which approximately 50 percent has been disbursed to communities (118 wards and over 121,500 households), 20 percent used for wildlife management, 12 percent retained by rural district

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councils, 3 percent used for expenses, and 15 percent still held by rural district councils pending allocation. Local communities used the allocations to fund development projects such as drilling new boreholes and building new schools and clinics. The CAMPFIRE program is an important tool to demonstrate to local communities the commercial value of wildlife and to halt increased poaching and the ongoing expansion of low-yielding, mainly subsistence agricultural land use in wildlife areas. Hunting also provides a large number of jobs to local communities.

¶15. (U) There also are a number of private wildlife conservancies still operating in the country that allow hunting, the largest being the Save Valley Conservancy (SVC) located in the south eastern lowveld area of the country near the border with Mozambique and South Africa. Formed in 1991, the SVC is made up of 31 title properties (including an American principal) covering 866,000 acres and holds a significant proportion of Zimbabwe's wild dog and rhino populations, including the endangered black rhino. There are also abundant populations of other southern Africa wildlife.

¶16. (U) Weldon Schenck, an American who owns Hammond Ranch in the SVC, told us that with the collapse of Zimbabwe's tourism industry, the SVC now relies almost entirely on sport hunting for income. Schenck added that without American hunters the SVC would be out of business which would lead to an even sharper increase in poaching and resettlement in the SVC as well as other conservancy areas and national parks. Schenck also highlighted that Hammond Ranch alone employs over 40 full time staff and supports 600 women in the Nyangambe community through a profit generating project.

¶17. (U) The SVC is also involved with several other important conservation projects. David Goosen, director of Sango Ranch in the SVC, reported that the SVC recently finalized an agreement with Parks to serve as a pilot program to take on local communities as legal business partners. Under the agreement, local communities will receive a set fee for each type of animal killed on a particular section of the conservancy in addition to receiving the meat from the animal. The idea is to instill in the local communities that wildlife has a financial value that needs to be protected from poaching and to prevent further resettlement encroachment into the conservancy. If successful, Parks plans to replicate the program to at least six other private conservancies throughout the country.

Comment

[¶18.](#) (C) Targeting SDNs with interests in the hunting industry would be difficult, although possible. A broader effort to eliminate U.S. hunters from Zimbabwe would definitely effect SDNs with hunting interests, but would potentially cause the collapse of the hunting industry and would consequently have a devastating effect on Parks, conservation in Zimbabwe, biodiversity including the survival of specific endangered species, and a number of local communities. End Comment.
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